



Malone et al v. Air & Liquid Systems Corporation et al

2015 | Cited 0 times | D. Delaware | April 14, 2015

COURT FOR OF MALONE ELIZABETH MALONE,

Plaintiffs,

LIQUID SYSTEMS CORPORATION,

14-406-SLR-SRF

Presently Plaintiffs ("Defendant" "HI Industries"), Procedure

160) Plaintiffs, ("Plaintiffs"),

Plaintiffs

Plaintiffs (30)

304) IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT

THE DISTRICT DELAWARE CHARLES D. and

v. AIR &

et al. Defendants.

Civil Action No.

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

I. INTRODUCTION

before the court in this asbestos-related personal injury action is a motion to dismiss Complaint, filed by Huntington Ingalls Industries, Inc. or

pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil 12(b)(6) for failure to state a claim upon which relief can be granted.



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(D.I. HI Industries requests dismissal of all claims and cross- claims with prejudice. (Id.) Charles and Elizabeth Malone do not oppose HI Industries' motion. (D.I. 272) However, request that the court dismiss HI Industries' motion without prejudice, with each party to bear their own costs. (Id.) For the reasons that follow, I recommend that the court convert this Rule 12(b)(6) motion to dismiss to a motion for summary judgment under Rule 56 and allow the thirty days to submit any opposition to HI Industries' motion. 1

1 The parties have also filed a joint stipulation and order to indefinitely stay all deadlines for HI Industries to file and serve a pleading or discovery in this action until the resolution of HI Industries' motion to dismiss. (D.I. Given the recommendation, the court will defer entry of an order until the pending motion has been resolved.

BACKGROUND Plaintiffs 2014. Plaintiffs

iii! 50-

("Mr. Malone")

Pascagoula, MS. if

if Plaintiffs

Plaintiffs

"Ingalls Ship Building,"

iii! if Plaintiffs

Plaintiffs

Plaintiffs II.

filed this personal injury action against HI Industries and other defendants on April 1, (DJ. 1) assert claims including negligence, strict liability, and breach of warranty against HI Industries, as well as a derivative claim for loss of consortium. (D.I. 8, 87)

The Complaint alleges Charles D. Malone experienced exposure to asbestos-containing products and/or equipment from approximately 1964 to 1982, while working at Ingalls Shipyard in Id. at 45(a). In 1964, for approximately four months, Ingalls Shipyard employed Mr. Malone as a ship fitter. Id. Furthermore, from approximately 1964 until 1982, Mr. Malone continued working at the Ingalls Shipyard work site for various independent contractors. Id. at 45 (a)-(b). allege that Mr. Malone was



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exposed to asbestos at Ingalls Shipyard, which led to his diagnosis of mesothelioma. Id.

HI Industries asserts that fail to state a claim upon which relief can be granted because they have sued the wrong entity and because they have not and cannot allege any means by which HI Industries could be liable for another entity's alleged activities. (D.I. 161) Namely, HI Industries asserts that it has never done business under the name of which is an unincorporated division of the HI Industries' subsidiary, Huntington Ingalls Incorporated. (D.I. 161 at 4-5; Ex. A, at 5, 7; D.I 8 at 22) HI Industries maintains it has no legal liability to the for its subsidiary's conduct solely because of a parent-subsidiary relationship. (D.I. 273 at 3)

do not oppose HI Industries' motion based upon the representations of HI Industries, as well as their own independent research, that HI Industries is not the proper party. (D.I 272) However, request the court grant HI Industries' motion to dismiss without

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Plaintiffs "proper suit" "in jurisdiction"

Plaintiffs

DISCUSSION

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face.'" U.S. (2009) 550 U.S.

UPMC 203, 210 2009). prejudice with each party to bear their own costs. Id. request dismissal without prejudice so that if needed, they may bring against HI Industries and/or one of its subsidiaries

a court with proper if facts later support an action. Id.

HI Industries contends that Plaintiffs are requesting a dismissal without prejudice merely to avoid a final dismissal of meritless claims because would not be able to state a plausible claim against HI Industries in any jurisdiction. (D.1273 at 3). Furthermore, HI Industries argues that a dismissal with prejudice as to HI Industries has no impact on whether Plaintiffs can pursue a claim against an HI



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Industries subsidiary. Id.

III.

a. Legal Standard The court may dismiss a claim for to state a claim upon which relief can be

Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(b)(6). A complaint must contain short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief, in order to give the defendant fair notice of what the ... claim is and the grounds upon which it Bell At!. Corp. v. Twombly, 544, 545 (interpreting Fed. R. Civ. 8(a)) (internal quotations marks omitted). A complaint does not need detailed factual allegations; however, plaintiffs obligation to provide the 'grounds' of his entitle[ment] to reliefrequires more than labels and conclusions, and a formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of action will not Id. at 545 (alteration in original) (citation omitted). In other words, complaint must contain sufficient factual matter, accepted as true, to 'state a claim to relief that is plausible on its Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 662, 678

(quoting Twombly, at 570). When presented with a Rule 12(b)(6) motion to dismiss for failure to state a claim, a court conducts a two-part analysis. Fowler v. Shadyside, 578 F.3d (3d Cir. First,

3 factual "all

conclusions." Second, "whether

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2008)). "[t]he

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See Pension Switlik

280 2000). the court separates the and legal elements of a claim, accepting of the complaint's well pleaded facts as true, but [disregarding] any legal Id at 210-11. the court determines the facts alleged in the complaint are sufficient to show that the plaintiff has a 'plausible claim for Id at 211 (quoting Iqbal, 556 at 679). In assessing the plausibility of a claim, the court must the complaint in the light most favorable to the plaintiff, and determine whether, under any reasonable reading of the complaint, the plaintiff may be entitled to Fowler, 578 F.3d at (quoting v. Cnty. of Allegheny, 515 F.3d 224, 233 (3d Cir. At a minimum, complaint must state enough facts to raise a reasonable expectation that discovery will reveal evidence of [each] necessary of a plaintiffs claim. Wilkerson v. New Media Tech. Charter Inc., 522 F .3d 315, 321 (3d Cir.

(internal quotation marks omitted).

b. Analysis In reviewing a motion to dismiss, courts generally limit their consideration solely to allegations contained in the complaint, exhibits attached to the complaint and matters of public

Benefit Guar. Corp. v. White Consol. Indus., 998 F.2d 1192, 1196 (3d Cir.1993). If the parties present matters outside the pleadings on a Rule 12(b)(6) motion to dismiss and the court does not exclude them, motion must be treated as one for summary judgment under Rule 56 [and][a]ll parties must be given a reasonable opportunity to present all the material that is pertinent to the Fed. R. Civ. 12(d). Thus, a court may not consider matters extraneous to the pleadings without converting the motion to dismiss into a Rule 56 motion for summary judgment. Benefit Guar., 998 F.2d at 1197; v. Hardwicke Co., 651 F.2d 852, 857 (3d Cir. 1981); Camp v. Brennan, 219 F.3d 279, (3d Cir.

4 Under Plaintiffs See U.S. (2007).

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F.Supp. Under

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parent." 2013 6002850, Supp. a Rule 12(b)(6) motion, the court must accept all factual allegations made by in the complaint as true. Erickson v. Pardus, 551 89, 94 In Plaintiffs' first amended complaint, aver that HI Industries does business as Ingalls Shipbuilding. (D.I. 8 22) In HI Industries' motion to dismiss, they rely on the affidavit of Mr. Fontaine to directly contradict the averment in Plaintiffs' first amended complaint. (D.I. 161, Ex. A) The sole purpose of the affidavit is to avoid liability as a parent company for the actions of its subsidiary. Id. Holding a parent company liable for a subsidiary's conduct piercing the corporate veil, which may be permissible under either of two distinct tests: 1) the alter ego test, or 2) the agency test. 2

StrikeForce Technologies, Inc. v. PhoneFactor, Inc., WL at *4 (D. Del. Nov. 13, as amended (Nov. 14, (citing Ethypharm France v. Bentley Pharmaceuticals, Inc., 388 F.Supp.2d 426, 432 (D. Del. United States v. Bestfoods, 524

51, 61 (1998)). The affidavit of Mr. Fontaine refutes both the alter ego and agency tests. (DJ. 161, Ex. A) In summary, HI Industries denies any commingling of assets or liabilities and denies any control over the activities of its subsidiary. (Id.; D.I. 161 at 2-3)

The court does not consider the affidavit of Mr. Fontaine as integral to, or explicitly relied upon in the complaint. It is extraneous to the pleadings. Pension Benefit Guar., 998 F.2d at 1197. Reliance upon the affidavit background as requested by HI Industries shifts

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the alter ego test, a subsidiary may be considered the alter ego of its parent corporation and render the parent liable if two requirements are met: (1) a lack of attention to corporate formalities; and (2) the use of the corporate form would cause fraud or a similar StrikeForce Technologies, Inc. v. PhoneFactor, Inc., WL at *4 (D. Del. Nov. 13,

as amended (Nov. 14, 2013); see also Mobil Oil Corp. v. Linear Films, Inc., 718 F 268 (D. Del. 1989); Outokumpu Engineering Enters., Inc. v. Kvaerner EnviroPower, Inc., 685 A.2d 724, 729 (D. Del. 1996); Applied Biosystems, Inc. v. Cruachem, Ltd., 772 1458, 1463 (D.Del.1991). the agency test, a parent corporation may be held liable for specific actions it directed or authorized the subsidiary to perform. this theory, only the conduct shown to be instigated by the parent may be attributed to the StrikeForce, WL at *5; see also Mobil Oil Corp., 718 F. at 271.

5 See 2013 6002850,



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See P.

2013 2013)

IV. CONCLUSION

See P. 340. Plaintiffs

(30)

See

U.S.C. P. the analysis from the pleadings to the merits. StrikeForce, WL at *2. The consideration of the affidavit requires the court to convert the motion to dismiss into a motion for summary judgment. Fed. R. Civ. 12(d); see also In re Burlington, 114 F.3d at 1426. 3

When a motion to dismiss is converted into a summary judgment motion, the court must give all parties a reasonable opportunity to present all the material that is pertinent to the pending motion. L. T. Associates, LLC v. Sussex Cnty. Council, WL 3998462, at *6 (D. Del. Aug. 5, (citing Rose v. Bartle, 871F.2d331, 341 (3rd Cir.1989)).

I recommend that the court convert HI Industries' Rule 12(b)(6) motion to a motion for summary judgment under Rule 56. Kulwicki v. Dawson, 969 F.2d 1454, 1462 (3d Cir. 1992). When a conversion takes place, all parties must be given an opportunity to obtain affidavits, declarations, or to take discovery and present materials to the court in support of their positions. Fed. R. Civ. 12(d); see also Rose, 871 F.2d at Therefore, I recommend that be given a period of thirty days from the date of this report and recommendation to submit opposition to HI Industries' motion for summary judgment. (D.I. 161 at 2; D.I. 8 at 22) If there are no further submissions pursuant to Rule 56(c), the court will recommend that summary judgment be granted in favor of HI Industries, dismissing them from this action with prejudice. Fed. R. Civ. P. 56(e)(3).

This Report and Recommendation is filed pursuant to 28 § 636(b)(l)(B), Fed. R. Civ. 72(b)(l), and D. Del. LR 72.1. The parties may serve and file specific written objections within fourteen (14) days after being served with a copy of this Report and Recommendation. Fed.

3 When a party presents materials extraneous to the pleadings in support of a Rule 12(b)(6) motion or in opposition thereto, the court has discretion to accept the extraneous materials and convert the motion to one for summary judgment. Kulwicki v. Dawson, 969 F.2d 1454, 1462 (3d Cir. 1992).

6 P. (10)



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See 2006);

Standing Order Objections Under P. October 2013,

1-+4, 2015 R. Civ. 72(b)(2). The objections and responses to the objections are limited to ten pages each. The failure of a party to object to legal conclusions may result in the loss of the right to de novo review in the District Court. Sincavage v. Barnhart, 171 F. App'x 924, 925 n.l (3d Cir.

Henderson v. Carlson, 812 F.2d 874, 878-79 (3d Cir. 1987). The parties are directed to the court's For Filed Fed. R. Civ. 72, dated 9, a copy of which is available on the court's website, <http://www.ded.uscourts.gov>. Dated: April